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RGF Independence In Question

There are 450 Regional Growth Fund (RGF) bids awaiting assessment by Government's independent advisory panel.

But local government needs to question the panel's independence after Deputy Chairman Sir Ian Wrigglesworth inexplicably seemed to rule out South East funding before even reviewing any bids.

RGF should target the delivery of the maximum 'bang for buck' in an already-successful economy and help create jobs in deprived areas – the South East offers both.

The vast scale of the South East challenge clearly isn't recognised by the RGF panel. We have 500,000 residents in deprived areas – equal to 20% of the entire North East population.

We also have over 641,000 public sector jobs – the third highest in England. I strongly support RGF's role in creating jobs to replace public employment but it's wrong to assume the South East needs no help.

Sir Ian is ignoring facts in favour of stereotypes when he says the South East is not in a good position to meet RGF criteria because the North East, North West, Yorkshire and Midlands have more dominant public sectors.

I hope there is still time for the RGF panel to prove it is willing to run with facts not hearsay.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Paul Carter
Chairman, South East England Councils